

NARRATOR: Jackson, Reid
INTERVIEWER: Troy Reeves
DATE: March 08, 2002
LOCATION: Rexburg, Idaho
PROJECT: Smokejumping/Forest Fire Fighting

Tape Counter	Page No.	Summary
000	1	Introduction.
005	1	In 1948 Reid Jackson first heard about smokejumping from his friend Jack Wilcox. He explains the process of applying for a firefighting job. He also talks about his first impressions of McCall and Lake Payette.
050	2	Reid goes into detail about the physical training of fire training, and discusses his early fire experiences. He talks about how smokejumpers had to learn how to read maps, the initial fire attack, refreshing their fire fighting skills, obstacle courses, calisthenics, and how to pack parachutes.
110	4	Smokejumpers had a lot of training apparatuses, including a let-down tower, different athletic devices, and other equipment designed to get a jumper into shape.
135	5	Reid goes into detail about importance of the Allen Roll. He explains how he modified the simulation of a roll from a tower to a more practical roll from the back of a moving pick-up truck.
235	7	Reid explains what smokejumpers did during the summers when they were not fighting fires. While in the Payette National Forest they did fence work, brush piling, and miscellaneous other jobs which helped the Rangers. They also managed their own budget and funding for the development of new equipment and the hiring of employees.
315	9	Reid had no problems with his first training jump due to good training simulations. Although there was still fear and nervousness, Reid explains the joy of the “adrenaline rush” when jumping on a fire.
350	9	In July of 1949 Reid had his first real smokejumping experience. He describes in detail a large fire in which his parachute got caught in a tree, and he sprained his ankle. Considering the size of this fire Reid felt that the use of smokejumpers was foolish.

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430	12	The fire season of 1949 was a rough year for the 35 smokejumpers. He describes some of the rough fires which he and his crew fought at Hells Canyon, Warm Spring Creek, and Casey Springs and the lessons they learned from each.
500	14	END OF SIDE ONE TAPE ONE SIDE TWO
000	15	Reid continues telling stories of large fires, especially the Circle End fire near the south fork of the Salmon River.
045	15	He talks about the effects that the Mann Gulch fire had on the Forest Service, and his own recollection of when he first heard about that fire.
075	16	Reid talks about what it takes for a smokejumper to stay focused. The communication, fire boss, and concern with safety are briefly mentioned as part of a complete training in fire.
100	17	Reid describes smokejumper's equipment, their eating rations, sleeping conditions, packed food, cross-cut saws, color streamers, and hand tools.
150	19	Reid explains how smokejumpers would get off a fire. Both the lookouts and pilots would check for signals from them to follow up on. He describes how smokejumper's backpacks are designed to help get them off of a fire.
290	22	Reid talks about his smokejumping years at both Weiser and McCall where he spent four years as the project leader of the jumper unit in McCall. He also describes the people he looked up to as a jumper.
375	23	Reid explains what he did on the off-season. He repaired jump gear and performed other fire related work as the project leader which included timber work, painting the barracks, and preparing the kitchen.
420	24	Reid explains the difference between a smokejumper and a smokechaser.
500	25	END OF SIDE TWO TAPE TWO SIDE ONE

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000	00	Reid elaborates on the importance of lookouts during the 1940s. He explains the importance of prompt detection, especially when the area has highly flammable grasses. Reid feels that detection has greatly diminished in its lookout capabilities.
045	00	Reid was afraid when he received his post as project leader. He states he felt under-qualified to run the jumper unit after Lloyd Johnson quit.
090	00	Reid explains the tensions and problems with finding his replacement after he quit. He recommended Del Caitlin as the project leader which created tension between Del and another jumper.
130	00	In detail Reid discusses how important the "kitchen" is to a fire crew. Eventually the McCall kitchen was shut down due to a cut in the forest budget.
175	00	Reid explains the hierarchy of the forest service. He compares the organization to the military.
200	00	Reid describes his career after quitting the project leader job in McCall. He explains his reasons for wanting to transfer, the promotions he received, and his experience when he changed from a fire Project Leader to a Ranger.
250	00	Reid explains his personal involvement with a fire air station that was to be built in Boise. He further discusses the battle between the Forest Service and the BLM [Bureau of Land Management] at that time.
450	00	Reid discusses changes in fire fighting during his years at the Forest Service which included Indian crews, air tankers, and support jumpers.
500		END OF SIDE ONE TAPE TWO SIDE TWO
000	00	Jackson continues describing the big changes that occurred in fire fighting such as fire research on fire behavior, improved fire suppression, equipment development, and new guidelines. Other problems he talks about are natural burning, letting go of too much forest at once, the need for more prescribed burning, and the importance of mapping out fuel concentrations.

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060	00	Reid discusses what he felt were problems with the Yellowstone fire. He focuses on the monetary cost to the Forest Service, and the policies which prevented it from being suppressed earlier. He also discusses his frustrations with timber sales and how forest decisions are made by a judge rather than somebody who has experience in the forest service.
130	00	Reid also examines the actions of the Forest Service during the Green Knoll fire [Wyoming]. He praised the fire fighters who worked on that fire for not losing any of the homes in Jackson Hole. He touches upon the issue of public money being used to fireproof private homes and feels that it is the responsibility of the homeowner to fireproof, not the government.
195		END OF SIDE TWO END OF INTERVIEW

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

Allen, Max
Beasley, Ray
Big Creek Fire
Boise National Forest
Catlin, Del
Charters Mountain Fire [1965]
Circle End Fire
Dodge, Earl
Holbrook Ranch [1961 Fire]
Johnson, Lloyd
Lost Hunter [movie]
Mann Gulch Fire [1949]
Northwest Passage
Payette National Forest
Peterson, "Paperlegs"
Roth, Kenny
Scott, LaVon
Storm King Fire
Telephone Creek
Teton National Forest
Thorn Creek Fire [1966]
U.S.F.S. [United States Forest Service]
Vassar, Slim
Webb, Wayne
Wilcox, Jack
Yellowstone Fire